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***NJDHSS Communicable Disease Service Weekly
Statewide Influenza Activity Summary***

Week Ending January 20, 2006

Influenza level of activity: "SPORADIC ACTIVITY"

From September 20, 2005, to date, 751 unique clinical specimens have been tested by the New Jersey Public Health and Environmental Laboratory and NJ clinical laboratories participating in the World Health Organization and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System*. What follows is a summary of culture-confirmed cases of influenza identified through testing performed by these laboratories for the week ending January 20, 2006:

- Number of influenza A culture confirmed cases: Four
- Number of influenza B culture confirmed cases: One

This is the seventeenth week of the 2005-06 influenza season in New Jersey. The NJDHSS Communicable Disease Service has not been notified of any influenza outbreak or increased activity in any health care facilities, nursing homes or schools throughout the state.

This week, rates of influenza-like illness (ILI) from nursing homes and emergency department visits are 1.13% and 6.08% respectively. The rate for school absenteeism showed 5.37%.

For the third week in a row, hospital laboratory surveillance for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) shows a slight decrease in the number of positives of all the tests performed. Overall, this week's surveillance parameter shows a lower level of activity when compared with the same period last season.

A few of the county percentage parameters showed figures well above the total average (see 17Jan.06pdf Table) but should not be interpreted as an increased level of activity since the denominator of reporting entities is very small.

From the analysis of all data collected this week from the ILI surveillance system, the level of influenza activity in the state of New Jersey remains at a level of "SPORADIC ACTIVITY". This level of activity is comparable with the same period last season.

According to the CDC's latest influenza weekly activity level report for week 1 (January 1– January 7, 2006), influenza activity remained stable in the United States. The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza was below the baseline level. Seven states reported widespread influenza activity; eleven states reported regional influenza activity; nine states reported local influenza activity; twenty one states, including New Jersey, New York City and the District of Columbia reported sporadic influenza activity; while two states reported no influenza activity. Since October 2, 2005, CDC has received reports of six influenza-associated pediatric deaths, four of which occurred during the current influenza season.

Influenza virus infection itself is not a clinical or laboratory reportable disease in New Jersey according to N.J.A.C. 8:57-1. Accordingly, activity levels must be extrapolated from weekly monitoring activities of healthcare facilities and providers dispersed around the state.

Avian flu WHO update:

The Ministry of Health in China, and Turkey's national influenza center in Ankara both reported additional culture confirmed cases of human infection with the H5N1 Avian influenza virus. Overall, the cumulative number of laboratory-confirmed human cases of Avian influenza A/(H5N1) reported to WHO stands at 149 including 80 deaths. WHO has released traveling guidelines to and from countries experiencing outbreaks in H5N1 Avian influenza. For more information go to:

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/>

*The laboratories conduct testing of pre-season isolates and the first isolates of the season. These isolates can provide information regarding circulating strains and information necessary for the vaccine formulation for the following year's flu season. Also test results from representative samples collected during peak influenza activity late in the season, and after a major influenza outbreak, may identify new variants that are just beginning to circulate in the community, helping to inform vaccine formulations for the following year.

References and Resources:

- To obtain previous ILI reports: <http://nj.gov/health/fluinfo/index.html>
- <http://www.nj.gov/health/flu/preventflu.shtml>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>
- <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/>